



SPEECH
OF
HON. JOHN T. HARRIS,
OF VIRGINIA,
IN FAVOR OF
CONCILIATION AND THE UNION.

DELIVERED IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, FEBRUARY 6, 1861.

The House having under consideration the report from the select committee of thirty-three, Mr. HARRIS, of Virginia, said:

MR. SPEAKER: Many questions of grave consideration, and a variety of themes for fruitful speculation, present themselves to the observer of current events. Issues are involved which not only affect the present, but their consequences will reach far into the future, and determine, for weal or woe, the destiny of republican institutions. Sir, under such circumstances, and in view of such consequences, I conceive it to be the part of wisdom, as well as the command of duty, for every member of this body, in the discharge of his representative trust, to do all in his power to avert the calamity which now threatens our common country. In doing this, I will "sing no peans to the Union." I prefer that its present greatness, its proud position before the world, the hitherto unrivaled prosperity of its people, its own grandeur and sublimity, shall speak its praises. Nor will I arraign any member on this floor or impugn his motives. The time for crimination is past. The evil is upon us. The crisis is at hand. We must meet it as becomes men and patriots. Neither looking to the right nor to the left, but with an eye single to the preservation of civil liberty and religious toleration, each should march up to the discharge of his duty, without regard for the consequences to himself. No personal sacrifice can be too great to preserve and perpetuate the only model on earth of a free representative Government; the only Government on whose legislation the will of the people is impressed, and which guarantees to all equal rights and privileges; a Government in which the highest position is open to the humblest freeman; a Government in which merit, not birth or wealth, is the sure guarantee of success and preferment; a Government, and the only one, whose laws extend over a territory which produces every variety of the necessities, as well as the comforts and luxuries, of life. Truly, sir, no people were ever so favored by a kind Providence. Unless the hand of destruction be stayed, none will deserve it less.

The question is presented to us, and we are brought to the issue, shall this Union be dissolved? We can neither avoid it, nor evade it, if we would. Each and every man in this country must take his position. Each has his part to play in this great drama—I fear tragedy—of human affairs. I have never had any hesitation as to the part, however humble, I should play. I shall use every exertion in my power to preserve this Government. I am for the Union even now, bleeding, torn, shattered as it is. I pray I may be enabled to be so forever!

When a people have been injured and insulted, as the South has been, I know they are apt to go too far in their endeavor to resent and redress the wrongs which have been inflicted upon them. They look only on one side of the picture. They think only of the injury which they have received, and thus press their determination to avenge it without regard to the consequences which may follow. Before a step so important and fatal as a dissolution of the Union be taken, we ought to stop, pause, reflect—reflect upon the dangers and difficulties which attend its dissolution,

as well as the evils which must result after it is accomplished. I know, sir, it is said southern men should not speak of these things; that it only emboldens the North, and makes them the more determined. The calamities attending and following a dissolution of the Union bear equally on both sections, and to each are boundless. Therefore, I think a free, full, and frank statement of our views is befitting the importance of the crisis. We should speak to each other as sober, discreet statesmen, appealing rather to the honor and justice of men, than to their fears or passions. If we cannot convince the *judgment* of the North that the South has never injured her, or trampled upon her rights, and that she ought and must do justice to the South, then, indeed, is our Government at an end. If, by threats of disunion, we could frighten the North into a temporary adjustment, I should not be willing to do so; for it would only postpone the sad event a brief space, and not avert it. We must have a Union based upon the affections of the people; each section observing a due regard for the rights and feelings of the other. This Government can alone be perpetuated by the affections of its citizens—not by the sword.

I think it is the duty of both sections to contemplate the horrors attending a disruption of the Government. That which, perhaps, rises above all others is, can it be done in peace? When we look at the peculiar character of our Government, its varied interests, its immense amount of public property, its vast extent of territory, he must be but an indifferent observer of public events who thinks all these questions can be adjusted without a resort to the arbitrament of the sword. There is no question which I think presents a greater difficulty than that which would grow out of the claim to the free navigation of the Mississippi river. Will the great Northwest permit this, the only natural outlet for their immense productions, to fall into the hands of a hostile Government? It may be said, by comity, this river would be open to free navigation. But this is answered, by those interested, that they will never permit a vested right, necessary to their existence, to rest on the good will and courtesy of a people whose interest and feelings are so hostile that they could not live under the same Government. This contest would enlist the whole Northwest. Ohio, bordering on the river by that name, which bears upon its bosom the immense products of that State, would feel the same interest which Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, Iowa, and Minnesota feel.

In the event of a dissolution of the Union, what is to become of our vast domain? Would not we of the South rightfully say that this was acquired by the common blood and treasure of the South as well as the North; and that we were, as we would be, entitled to our just proportions? Would not the North reply that we withdrew voluntarily from the Government, and that we thus forfeited all claim to any portion of our hitherto common territory? I deny, sir, that this ought to be their claim; but, judging from the past and the present, I can come to no other conclusion. Then here is an issue between the sections. Will the South yield without a struggle, and surrender all this vast extent of country, about which she has said so much?

But it may be said that, to deny the South its just proportion of the Territories, is so manifestly wrong that no people would be guilty of such an act. The answer is, the Government will be destroyed on the ground of the unfaithfulness of those who would make the denial, and because of their utter disregard of our constitutional rights. It is said all this can be settled by treaty *after* the separation, and a fair division would be the result. If this be true, could we not much more easily adjust it now while we are *one* people, living under a common Government? If we cannot adjust it *now*, the chances are certainly against it *then*. It would be a singular proposition, indeed, that a great nation should separate upon a given point of dispute, in order to settle amicably *that very point*. The South would want to extend slavery into that portion lying west of us, and would take military possession—the only mode left. The North might contest that right. A conflict may thus begin on our frontier, which would end in a general war between the two sections.

But we will suppose we have passed these two points in peace: are we then clear of all difficulties? Another difficulty is presented in the division of the Army, the Navy, and the munitions of war. The public property in this District, being in southern territory, would of right belong to the South. But would the North concede that right? We must bear in mind, sir, that we break up the Government because the North has denied the people of the South their constitutional rights, and upon the hypothesis that she will deny them in future. Then we must not only treat them as a hostile people, but as an unjust and aggressive people. This being true, they would certainly claim at least a part, if not the whole, of the public property of this District. The South would never submit to this. The re-

sult, I fear, would be, that upon this sacred spot, selected by the Father of his Country as its capital, would be fought the first great battle, which would end its existence. This city, hallowed by his name, and these streets, made sacred by his touch, and so constructed by him as to protect his countrymen from a foreign enemy, will be the theater of a great war, which must end in their destruction—a war in which the deep-mouthed cannon's roar will startle the very ashes of the patriot as they sweetly repose beneath the green sod of his own Mount Vernon.

The evils which must follow a dissolution of this Government are past comprehension. No human mind can conceive or comprehend them. It would, I fear, be the end of constitutional liberty. Inaugurate the system of disintegration; set the example, and all our subsequent governments will be but "ropes of sand," to be broken by every breeze of passion or prejudice. For the slightest cause of offence, either real or imaginary, any State would retire at pleasure, and resume her sovereignty. There will be more Republics than two. New England would either set up for herself, or be required to do so. The middle North States would form another; the great Northwest another; the States of the Pacific slope another; Texas possibly would, in time, resume her independence. It is not beyond conjecture that in a few years the "cotton States" would form one Republic, and the remainder of the Southern States another. This is not a pleasant state of things to contemplate. But I think it the part of wisdom and discretion to view this great question in all its aspects. We already find it painfully true that, in the last few years, the recognition of a difference of interest in the southern States has become too common. We have heard southern statesmen dividing the South into "cotton States" and "border States." Yea, even now, before we have made an effort at forming a southern confederacy, we observe this feeling manifesting itself. The Governor of South Carolina has recommended to his people that, under the new government of his State, she shall pass a law prohibiting the border States from bringing their slaves into South Carolina. But if we should succeed in forming a southern confederacy, would not questions soon arise to disturb our harmony? The tariff, protection, direct tax, the African slave trade, would, I believe, become elements of discord.

But, sir, evils greater than these present themselves to us. We of the border States are very differently situated from our brethren of the "cotton States." We will be connected geographically with this hostile Republic, or Republics, for *two thousand miles*. We must suffer all the loss by escape of slave property, and bear the brunt and burden of all wars which must, in course of time, ensue. They would make common cause with us; but, from their geographical position and sparseness of white population, but few, comparatively, could leave their homes to fight in a distant country. Our States must be the battle-fields, and our border the scenes of blood and carnage. But, it may be said, there will be no war; that we can adjust all matters by treaty. If the North is so fanatical on the subject of slavery that we cannot live in a common Government with her, is it likely she would enter into a treaty by which fugitive slaves are to be returned? And if she did, would that treaty be any more respected than the fugitive slave bill is now? We must recollect, when the Union is dissolved, the fugitive slave bill is dissolved with it. Our slaves, then being free from all legal restraint in the North, would leave us in greater numbers than they do now. The North would do as England does in regard to our slaves escaping into Canada: refuse to give them up. The question then arises, would this produce a war? I think it would? If war is to follow the escape of every slave, ought not all the people of this country, North as well as South, to pause ere it be too late, and endeavor to avert such a calamity?

If the Union be dissolved, there is yet another important question about which we of the border States should ponder. Having no fugitive slave bill then, our slave property would require protection from escape. I can see no other form in which it could be had, except by a strong police force, or a cordon of armed men along the whole line, which would divide us from the North; either of which must be attended with many troubles and great expense. These are difficulties not attending our brethren of the cotton States. We stand as a barrier between them and their enemies. They can lose no negroes, nor be subjected to any of the horrors of a border war.

Virginia has a peculiar interest and feeling in preserving the peace and harmony of this country. No county of any State in the great Northwest but contains some of her sons. Her sturdy yeomanry have gone by thousands to seek their homes in that inviting region. In the event of a conflict between the sections, the horrible spectacle would be presented of brother meeting brother and father meeting son upon the field of battle. God grant the time may never come when the gallant son

of the Old Dominion in the far West will exclaim, "I am become a stranger unto my brethren and an alien unto my mother's children!"

When we are invited to take a step so important as the total disruption of our Government, involving as it may the consequences which I have portrayed, ought we not to pause long enough to inquire into the causes which impel us to this last resort? When these causes have been learned, it is our duty to make an effort to remove them, and thus exhaust every constitutional remedy before we plunge into the unfathomed depths of disunion. The immediate cause for disunion, as it is alleged by some, is the election of Lincoln by a sectional party with purposes hostile to the institutions of the South. Is there no remedy for this? True, we cannot undo what the people have done; for he is elected under the forms of the Constitution. But the South, aided by that ever true and loyal Democracy at the North, had their defence in their own hands. They had a majority in both Houses of Congress, and would have had for the first two years of his administration. And judging that noble band of patriots, one million five hundred thousand strong, by their past record, we are bound to presume they will gain on our common enemy at their next trial of strength. What a sublime and patriotic spectacle it would present for the admiration of the world—a united, conservative, and constitutional element standing up for their rights in the Union. But, sir, aside from this, so firmly is the institution of slavery fixed in the affections of the people of the South, and so impregnable is its basis, that it defies all assault, from whatever source it comes.

I believe no statesman in Virginia has said that the bare election of Lincoln is sufficient cause to dissolve the Union. It will be well remembered how all parties denied this charge during the late canvass. Then, what other practical questions present themselves to us which require us so hastily to sever our connection with the Government? It is no act passed by Congress; for, be it known, not a single act is now in force on the statute-books of the United States which was not passed by the aid of southern votes. Most of them have been passed by a Democratic Congress, or signed by a Democratic President. But we are told, and correctly, too, that many of the northern States have passed laws impeding the execution of the Fugitive slave bill. The States which passed them stand in open rebellion to the Constitution; and if prompt measures had been taken to punish the first offending State by the powers under the Constitution, I venture to affirm that no other State would have followed the example. The passage of these laws are of no recent date. The first, I believe, was passed by Vermont, in the year 1843, just two years before Texas came into the Union. Pennsylvania passed hers in 1847. We have, for this long period, permitted these laws to sleep on the statute-books of the North. We have given no notice to those States that we demand their repeal; which I think we ought to do before we break up the Government on that account. Sir, I do not mean to extenuate or palliate any act which the North has committed in violation of our constitutional rights. On the contrary, I allege that every State which has passed laws in violation of the Constitution, having violated the compact, is virtually out of the Union; and the individuals who participated in their passage deserve the severest punishment known to civilized Governments. They are the offending States, and themselves ought to be required to repeal their unconstitutional laws, or leave the Union. These laws, however mischievous was their design, are null and void. They are an insult to the South, but of no practical injury.

I believe there is but one other question which is assigned as a reason for immediate disunion; and that is, the Republican party deny to the South her just rights and equality in the common territories. This is true; but I do think, as statesmen and patriots, discarding all passion and prejudice, we ought to take a practical view of every question which presents itself for our consideration. There is no Territory now open to which their doctrine of congressional prohibition can apply. Does not prudence require us to wait until a case arises, when our constitutional rights are denied, before we break up a great and good Government like this? I will never consent to do it because a party hold opinions against my section, unless they undertake to execute them.

I believe, sir, I have noticed all the prominent causes of complaint which we of the South allege against the Republicans and Abolitionists of the North, except their interference with our social institutions by incendiaries, armed traitors, and fiendish book-writers. I shall not stop to resurrect the bones of John Brown. A sheriff of my State erected a monument to his memory the day before his death, which stands as a warning more potent than anything I could say. Nor will I bring to light that infamous Helper book. Its day, I hope, is past. Its introduction in this House killed

one Speaker, made another, filled the pockets of its felon author, and accomplished for him the real object he had in view. This is enough.

Sir, having surveyed the whole field, is there any evil of which we so justly complain which would be remedied by disunion? Disunion will not execute the fugitive slave bill. On the contrary, it will wipe it out. Disunion will not repeal those obnoxious laws. Dissolution will not give us any more rights in the Territories than we have now. Dissolution will not stop the mails or the printing of books. These evils will all exist after dissolution, and, I fear, in a more aggravated form than now.

Amid the great excitement which pervades the whole South, I think it well to give expression to these thoughts, that we may not act too hastily in a matter of such thrilling and vital importance; but act coolly, calmly, thoughtfully, and wisely, as considerate men directing the destinies of constitutional liberty, and the fate of a great people.

Permit me to say to you of the Republican party, that you hold, as I believe, the Union in your hands. You can save it; and you alone can. The cotton States are gone. They want no compromise, if we are to believe what some of their Representatives on this floor said. On the second day of the present session, when an effort was being made to raise a committee with a view of compromising the difficulties which now beset us—

Mr. HAWKINS, of Florida, said he would not vote to raise a committee for that purpose, "for I am opposed, and I believe my State is, to all and every compromise. The day of compromise is past.

Mr. SINGLETON, of Mississippi, said: "I was not sent here to make any compromise, or to patch up existing difficulties."

Mr. MILES, of South Carolina, announced that South Carolina would go out of the Union on the 17th instant.

Mr. PUGH, of Alabama, said: "As my State of Alabama intends following South Carolina out of the Union by the 10th of January next, I pay no attention to any action in this body."

Mr. BRECKINRIDGE said, in December, 1859: "The Representatives from Georgia, from South Carolina, from Alabama, from Mississippi, not to speak of other southern States, say that they represent their constituents; nay, say that they do not go as far as their constituents, and they declare that *they are ready at any moment for a separate confederacy.*" I cannot refrain from using his own patriotic language which next follows, "God forbid that such a thing should take place!" Thus it appears that these States were ready at any moment, as far back as 1859, for a separate confederacy. Therefore, I see no hope of prevailing on them to pause now.

But you, gentlemen of the Republican party, by coming forward like men, and rendering justice to the South, can prevent any further rupture in the Government until the border States, by a firm and conciliatory course, can adjust with you, all the pending difficulties. This being done, I think those States would return. The Union would then be on a more permanent basis than ever before. The ever glorious flag of the stars and stripes, with its "red, white, and blue," would once more float in triumph from our Capitol; and from every State-house and every hilltop, with every star and every stripe, would wave over the happiest and freest people on earth. But if you persist that you have done no wrong, will make no compromise or concessions, mark what I tell you, that, right or wrong, the day is not distant when every slave State will be out of this Union. Does the South make any demand inconsistent with your rights? Does she ask you to yield any principle or right of property? Does she ask you to yield or sacrifice any opinion you hold? She only asks that her property, her constitutional rights, and her institutions, may be respected and preserved, and that you shall not so exercise your opinions as to do injustice to her. But you say there is no cause for this excitement at the South. Admit you so think; yet you must confess, the South just as honestly believes there is such cause. Then, is it not your duty to rally to your country and save it from total destruction, when you can do it without yielding any principle or right you hold dear? Does not your own self-preservation require it? Does not the unsettled condition of your section, as well as mine, require it? Does not the reduction of the price of every staple you produce require it? Do not your idle factories and your working classes require it? Do not your closed banks, your stagnated commerce, require it? Yea, does not every consideration of patriotism, as well as duty to your people, demand it?

I trust you will meet this question as its importance demands, not stopping to inquire the cause or want of cause for the existing difficulties, but come forward in a prompt and patriotic manner to apply the remedy, and thus preserve the life of

the Constitution and the Union—a Union which, despite the assaults of foes within and foes without, has gone on in its rapid strides to glory and grandeur unprecedented in the history of nations. Sirs, the world looks to this Republic as the only living, and so far, successful experiment of free government. Greece, Rome, Poland, France, have all failed and passed away. I pray that this, our own free and happy country, may not share the direful fate of all others, and thus prove the tyrant's maxim, that "man is not capable of self-government."

It is said all the States should go out with a view to reconstruction. I prefer that the remaining States should adjust all questions of dispute, and the States now out will soon return.

Reconstruct! Reconstruct! As well try to reconstruct the shattered vase or to tie up Nîgara in a handkerchief, and put it in your pocket, or reconstruct the earth after it shall have been consumed by fire, as to attempt to reconstruct this Government after it shall have been divided by Mason and Dixon's line. Tear down to build up; go out to come in; destroy to preserve; shatter to reconstruct, are theories beyond my comprehension. Sir, they are mere delusions or fascinating arguments to get us out of the Union. That being accomplished, we will be answered as the cotton States now answer Virginia's appeal: "We are out forever; we want no guarantees; we will never come back."

Let the friends of adjustment and Union stand firm, and all our troubles will yet be settled. If not here, then let the conventions of the remaining slave States present a fair basis of settlement to the *people* of the North. It would, I am sure, be accepted; and peace would once more reign supreme in our land. Let the people, North and South, have control of the question, and *it will be settled*.

Sir, we are now brought to consider if there is any plan by which these unhappy differences can be adjusted. I confess I can see none which better commends itself to all sections than that offered by the venerable Senator from Kentucky, (Mr. CRITTENDEN.) I think both sections can come to this proposition without any sacrifice of a practical question, and I shall endeavor to show this. It provides, first, that the Constitution shall be so amended that slavery can never be interfered with in the States. I shall not stop to discuss this branch of the question, as a large majority of the Republicans, as I am informed, are willing to vote for it, and, of course, all southern men and northern Democrats will.* The next is, it proposes to divide the Territories by the line of 36° 30'—all north to be free; all south, slavery to be protected.

By the decision of the Supreme Court, the South has a right to carry slaves into all the Territories, and have them protected. The South is willing to give up the right to carry slaves north of 36° 30', if you gentlemen of the Republican party will agree to protect slavery south of that line. True, slavery never would go north of that line; but the South surrenders the *right* to take them there. It is equally true that slavery will never need protection south of that line in any of our territory. Then, the South agrees to yield the *right* to carry slaves where, by the laws of nature, slavery never can go; and she asks you, in turn, to agree to protect slavery where it *never will need it*. Then the surrender of principle is mutual. The surrender of any practical, useful right, is made by neither. For, by your Chicago platform, you only propose to prohibit slavery "where necessary;" and, as it can never be necessary, you do not even violate your party platform, about which you have said so much.

Mr. Breckinridge said, in December, 1859, "the territorial question is nearly fought out—yes, fought out." Since then, Kansas has been admitted; which, I think, determines all that is *practical* in regard to the Territories. Kansas is a free State. You have got the *flesh* and the *marrow* of the Territories, will you not divide the *bone*? Or will you break up the Government rather than agree to protect slavery where it will never be required? Will you not come to this fair and equitable division of an *abstraction*, and give peace to the country? I think the judgment of the people, North as well as South, will say you ought to do it.

The Crittenden amendment, then, proposes to incorporate it into the Constitution, that slavery shall not be abolished in this District, in the forts, dock-yards, navy yards, &c. You of the Republican party say you have no idea of interfering with

* On the 11th instant, since the delivery of my remarks, the following resolution was voted for by *every member* of Congress present—161:

"Resolved, That neither the Federal Government, nor the people or the governments of the non-slaveholding States, have the right to legislate upon or interfere with slavery in any of the slaveholding States in the Union."

slavery in these places, but they are matters too insignificant for a constitutional amendment, and that you are willing to pass resolutions expressive of your feelings on this subject, to assure the South. But, sirs, the South have fears on these points, and she only asks you now to place it beyond your power to do what you say you have no idea of doing, by inserting such an amendment in the Constitution. When you can give us this, and not even violate your party creed, as you state it, will you do it? Ought you not to do it? Is it asking too much, that you shall put it beyond your power to do that which you say you have no idea of doing? Surely not. Then, gentlemen, come forward in a spirit of brotherly love and give these guarantees to the South. The distinguished gentleman from Ohio (Mr. SHERMAN) said, if this Government were broken up, it would be divided into more than two Governments; that the man was now living who would be the Napoleon of some military despotism in this country. If this be true, I ask the gentleman, who now sits before me, when that awful period arrives, and his neighbors and friends appeal to him to know if that state of things could have been avoided, what will be his answer? His answer will be, sir: "We could have avoided them if it had not been for the Chicago platform. But we had to stick to the platform, and in sticking to the platform we lost the Government." Yes, stand to the platform, while the pillars of the Government are giving way beneath us. Destroy the Government, and what becomes of you and your party platform? Your platform will fall with your country; while you may rise to be the "Napoleon of a despotism." No parties then; no platforms then. No, gentlemen, no; let us not contemplate such scenes as these, but avert the terrible calamity ere it be too late. We can do it; we ought to do it; we must do it. If I had the power, I would say, *you shall do it.*

In 1850, when the country was convulsed from center to circumference on this very question, Mr. Webster, rising to the dignity and importance of the crisis, voted against the Wilmot proviso. He said he was the author of that measure, but that he would never exercise it when it would have no practical effect, but only wound and insult his southern brethren. Can you not do as he did—that man of patriot heart, whose mind so far soared above his peers, that where others halted, weary in their flight, "he stooped to touch the loftiest thought?" Will you, like the sage of Marshfield, come to the rescue of your country, and save it from total destruction? Or will you, under the name of "executing the laws,"

"Let slip the dogs of war?"

If you fail to do the former, but do the latter, I have no threats, no prophecies, to make. I only ask you to remember that "the race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong."

Virginia calls upon Massachusetts—the same Massachusetts to whose relief she fled "in the days that tried men's souls." Let the spirit which animated the elder Adams, when he arose in the continental Congress and said: "Mr. President, I nominate George Washington, of Virginia, as commander-in-chief of the armies of the United Colonies," but animate his descendants now. Yes, let us be governed by the patriotism of that man, who, with the sage of Monticello, gave to the world the Declaration of Independence. Let us preserve the rich legacy given to us by those patriots who lived together, who worked together, and who, under the providence of God, on the same day—the anniversary of American independence—died together.

Virginia calls upon you, her sons of the great Northwest, to rally to the rescue of your country. She gave you an empire. She gave you the sturdy sons who felled the forest and tilled the field. She gave you all you possess. She has a right to command your services; and she does command them. Will you obey? Or will you, in the spirit of black ingratitude, like the adder, turn upon her and sting her? Or will you, like Sampson, to show your strength, tear down the pillars which support the temple, and bury all in one undistinguished ruin? Then, will you force the old mother to exclaim: "Hear, O heavens! and give ear, O earth! I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me!"

Mr. Speaker, let us think of the honest millions, the support and the pillars of the Government, who, unobserved, watch with such deep solicitude the condition of their country. "None see their pure devotion, none their tears, their faith and love which burn within them" for their country. Think, oh! think, I entreat you, think of them! But if you will have no regard for the honest people who have made you what you are, and who are not responsible for the burdens with which they are now afflicted, then think of our great Government, now the pride of America, the admiration of the world. Divide us, dis sever our States and erect petty confeder-

acies, warring with each other, in their stead, and none will be found so poor as to do us reverence.

Sir, I confess it grieves my heart when I see gentlemen on that side of the Chamber sit, with so much indifference, as State after State is shooting from its sphere; when they must well know that unless something be done, and that promptly, too, there is danger that every slave State, whether right or wrong, will be gone—gone, and forever. Nor can I witness with less feeling the glad smile which is produced on others as the lightning's flash brings the same sad intelligence. It is to me, like the smile which plays upon the face as “the blood comes gurgling forth from out the throat of the wild suicide.”

Sir, my own State, Virginia, has elected her delegates to deliberate upon her welfare and her destiny; and while her action may be against my judgment, yet, when it is taken, then her lot becomes my lot; her fate my fate; her destiny my destiny. Her will, not mine, be done. But my prayer is, that we may yet heal the breach; that some Ararat will swell above the flood, or some dove will bear the olive branch of peace—

“And all the clouds that lowered upon our house,
In the deep bosom of the ocean buried”—

and that the bow of promise, of prosperity, of happiness, of unity and love, may once more span our political heavens.

But, when all efforts at compromise fail, and all be lost; and when the wickedness of men has destroyed the best Government on earth, and plunged a nation into blood; when the American eagle shall drop the olive branch of peace, and “grasp only the arrows of war;” when brother shall rise against brother, and father against son, and anarchy and “confusion worse confounded” shall reign supreme; when, from an innocent and outraged people, the sound will ring in the ears of the guilty, “ye knew your duty, but ye did it not;” and when, from a thousand guilty tongues, it will be echoed back, in the language of the murdered Macbeth, “Thou canst not say I did it;” let us trust in Him who holds the destinies of men and the destinies of nations in His hand; in Him who creates the storm and directs the whirlwind; for it is sweet to know,

“There’s a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will.”

Heaven and earth will witness, if my country must fall, I am innocent.

APPENDIX.

As the impression is sought to be made, that the South has but few friends at the North, I have concluded, since making my speech, to append the popular vote for President in 1860.

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| Whole vote of the United States | 4,663,170 |
| Lincoln received | 1,857,610 |
| Douglas (Pennsylvania fusion) | 1,544,847 |
| Breckinridge | 669,082 |
| Bell (Pennsylvania fusion) | 590,631 |
| The combined vote of Douglas, Breckinridge, and Bell, in the northern States | 1,554,316 |
| In the southern States combined | 1,250,244 |

It will thus be seen that the conservative northern vote is larger by 304,072 than *all the votes in the South of all parties*. In other words, there are more true men in the northern States than there are voters in all the South.

The conservative vote of the United States is 2,804,560, being about one million more than Lincoln's vote.

